Proposal to improve relations with Sri Lanka

338. SHRI JAGADISH JANI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to improve relations with Sri Lanka;

(b) whether Government are also taking steps to solve the ethnic problem in that country;

(c) if so, the details of the steps taken in the matter;

(d) whether the matter figured in the talks between both the countries, Foreign Ministers in their last meeting at Sri Lanka; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI KAMAL MORARKA): (a) It has always been Government's policy to have friendly and close bilateral relations with Sri Lanka.

(b) and (c) The ethnic problem in Sri Lanka is ultimately a matter to be settled between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamils. Government have again conveyed to the Sri Lankan Government that only a negotiated political settlement legitimate Tamil demands can lead to a lasting solution of the ethnic problem.

(d) Yes, sir.

(e) We urged the Sri Lanka Government to pursue measures to bring parties concerned to the negotiating table. While expressing concern over the large presence of Sri Lanka refugees in India, we also stressed the need for the Sri Lanka Government to create conditions for the voluntary and early return of refugees presently in India.

Convention of Indian Muslims in America

339. SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's Ambassador to the United States of America attended a Convention of Indian Muslims in America held at Maryland on 23rd and 24th November, 1990;

(b) whether some of the resolutions passed at the Convention condemned India for discrimatory practices against Indian Muslims; and

(c) if so, the action taken/proposed to be taken by Government so that such incidents do not recur in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI KAMAL MORARKA): (a) The Indian Ambassador to the United States attended a dinner on 24th November, 1990 which was the concluding function of the Convention of Indian Muslims in America held at Maryland. The Convention itself was spread over two days, i.e. 23rd and 24th November, 1990.

(b) Yes sir. A resolution was passed on the conclusion of the Convention condemning "the discriminatory practices" with respect to educational and employment opportunities for Indian Muslims in general and Kashmir Muslims in perticular.

(c) When the Ambassador heard the resolution, which was read out after his own speech, he intervened to stress on the need for Muslims to join the mainstream and look at their success stories and not merely keep talking about the allegations of discrimination. The Ambassador also reaffirmed India's enduring committment to secularism.

Expansion of telecommunication services

340. SHRI R. T. GOPALAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to expand telecommunication services in States during the Eighth Five Year Plan period;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and